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PP RUEHDBU RUEHSL
DE RUEHNO #0540/01 3241708
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM USMISSION USNATO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3631
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 000540

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NATO](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: NATO-RUSSIA: ROGOZIN UNCLEAR ON WHY MOSCOW PULLED
THE PLUG ON NRC REFORM

REF: A. STATE 118921
[1](#)B. USNATO 526

Classified By: Ambassador Ivo Daalder for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Russian Mission to NATO has painted a picture of disarray within the Moscow interagency to explain Russia's decision to pull the plug on NATO-Russia Council (NRC) reform. The Mission proposed that at their December meeting, NRC Foreign Ministers issue a new tasking for reform, although Russia would insist that this work be more conservative than previously proposed. Russia has twice backed out of reforming the NRC, and a new tasking will not insure that it follows through this time. Russia is now stepping back from mutually agreed NATO-Russia priorities, and is attempting to insist that the NRC limit itself to Russia's priorities. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Russian Ambassador to NATO Dmitri Rogozin told Ambassador Daalder on November 19 that a lack of clear instructions from Moscow had necessitated the Russian decision to halt work on the NRC reform document "Taking the NRC Forward" (ref A). Rogozin complained that he often heard "one thing" from the MFA while the MOD "said another," making it "difficult" for him to support discussion of NRC reform. Rogozin suggested that the Foreign Ministers use their December meeting to task the NRC to work on reform. Ambassador pointed out that the Ministers had tasked the NRC with this initiative at the last Ministerial, prompting Rogozin to respond that before he spoke "directly" with Medvedev, possibly in December, Russia could not resume work on this issue. Ambassador told Rogozin that the Russian decision had made it difficult for the NRC to work on other initiatives that Moscow might want.

[1](#)3. (C) Russian DCM Nikolai Korchunov elaborated on Rogozin's comments, telling us on November 20 that the Russian Mission had engaged in negotiations on NRC reform for several weeks without instructions from Moscow, until it was directed to tell the NRC Preparatory Committee that Russia would cease work on this initiative (ref B). Korchunov was vague as to whether this direction came from Rogozin or from Moscow, but indicated that the MFA had determined that the NRC reform under discussion was too drastic for the GOR to accept and ended the exercise. Other Russian ministries, especially the MOD, had complained to the MFA that they did not understand how NRC reform would be implemented or how their staff in the Russian Mission to NATO would interact with the NRC. Korchunov reiterated the Russian proposal to have the Ministers task the NRC to work on reform at the December

Ministerial, albeit in a less radical version than was previously under consideration.

Comment

¶4. (C) The Russian proposal for another Ministerial tasking on NRC reform could suggest that Moscow is looking for a way to be constructive on this issue. However, Russia has now backed out of this exercise twice, two hours before the June NRC Ministerial and now two weeks before the December Ministerial.

¶5. (C) Russia's unilateral decision to end work on NRC reform is consistent with its failure to support, other than with rhetoric, the initiative taken by Allies to move the NRC away from serving as a talk shop and toward mutually beneficial cooperation in areas such as Afghanistan, Missile Defense, counter-terrorism, and counter-piracy, which would enhance NATO-Russia ties. Russia continues to prefer academic exercises such as the proposed Joint Review of common security challenges. Allies have been united in responding to Moscow's actions by reminding the Russians that PermReps agreed at the November 11 NRC Ambassadorial meeting that the Joint Review tasking would be acceptable only as part of a balanced package of deliverables for the December Ministerial.

¶6. (C) Practical cooperation was the agreed priority for all Allies in deciding to restart the NRC after the "no business as usual" suspension of work following the Georgia war.

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Moscow's abandonment of the basis for this consensus raises many concerns. It is urgent that the U.S. decide how to respond to these latest developments - whether to defer a decision on the Joint Review to focus all discussion only on key areas of cooperation like MD, counter-narcotics, and possibly Afghanistan, or to wait until Moscow has decided what it wants from the NRC. The current approach is not working.
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